

is superior to that of other countries because of the lively interest taken by consuls fresh from the home field and in touch with home business. An American journalist or promising young lawyer is vastly superior to the "tea-drinking, tennis-playing" official whose training in the English or German service, for example, has cultivated a proneness to take life easy, who imagines himself too much of a diplomat to descend to vulgar details of business, and too much of a gentleman to "hustle." Yes, but is that the alternative? The enterprising newspaper man and promising lawyer are woefully in the minority, and for the most part find their way to the more prominent but, in many respects, least im-

portant posts. Furthermore, neither youth nor enterprise nor experience in home fields is a sufficient guaranty of acceptability,—perhaps sometimes quite the reverse,—as was shown, to our humiliation, several years ago, when an American consul remained seated while a toast to the queen was being drunk, explaining his action by saying that all Americans were princes!

It is only just to say that there are many good consuls in the service to whom the business men of the country are under obligations; but how long will it be before their places are filled by new and inexperienced men? As has often been said, the system, rather than the personnel, is blameworthy.

ORIGIN OF THE LINCOLN RAIL.

AS RELATED BY GOVERNOR OGLESBY.

BY J. McCAN DAVIS.

BEFORE the year 1860 nobody seems to have attached any particular importance to the fact that Abraham Lincoln had been, once upon a time, a rail-splitter.

The month of May of that year marks the advent of the fence-rail as a factor in the politics of that era. This was no accident or spontaneous happening, but was carefully planned, and was executed with an adroitness which made the effect most dramatic and impressive. It is, in a sense, true, as a biographer says, that it "was not planned by politicians." The idea was conceived and the rail movement undertaken by *one* politician, whose only coadjutor was a white-whiskered old Democrat. The politician was young, ardent, and resourceful. He had known Mr. Lincoln for many years; indeed, he was only a youth of sixteen years when he first met him, in 1840. He was even then an outspoken Whig, who instantly won Lincoln's friendship and retained it ever afterward.

This youth's home was at Decatur, only a few miles from the spot on the Sangamon bottom where Lincoln, in 1830, had spent his last year under his father's unpretentious roof. He had been to the spot, and was familiar with the local traditions: how here, in the wilderness, the brawny young Lincoln

had wielded an ax and a maul, and felled giant trees, and split thousands of rails, and constructed many rods of fence. It so happened that the young politician possessed a fine dramatic instinct; and when, in the spring of 1860, people began talking of Lincoln as a candidate for the Republican nomination for President, he saw at once the possibilities in the fence-rail.

This man was Richard J. Oglesby, who in 1860 was thirty-five years of age, and had just been nominated by the Republicans of his district for the office of State senator. He was destined to become a soldier of much distinction,—a major-general,—and later United States senator, thrice governor, and the most beloved citizen of his State in the generation immediately following the Civil War.

The fence-rail was the most conspicuous and striking feature of the campaign of 1860. It served much the same purpose as had the log cabin in another campaign twenty years earlier. It appealed to the people almost irresistibly; it told of the candidate's rise from a humble beginning; it was the emblem of his thorough democracy. Nothing else, aside from the great principles for which he stood, contributed so much to his election. Governor Oglesby, a short time

before his death, related the circumstances to the writer.

The movement had its inception a short time before the meeting, in May, 1860, of the Illinois Republican State Convention at Decatur, which was Oglesby's home. The convention was not only to nominate candidates for the various State offices, but, more important, was to select and instruct delegates to the national convention. The availability of Lincoln as a Presidential candidate was then being discussed. At that very time, however, an organized effort was being made to capture the State for Seward. It was conceived by Oglesby that the State convention should not only indorse Lincoln in unequivocal terms, but that it should be made the occasion of a demonstration which would impress the whole country. He had thought of the rails, and believed they would take the convention by storm and captivate the popular fancy. He proceeded circumspectly at first, taking only one man into his confidence. This was John Hanks, an unlettered old man, a relative of Lincoln on the maternal side, who had been a staunch Democrat. Moreover, he and Lincoln had split rails together.

"I had known John Hanks all my life," said Governor Oglesby to the writer. "He was a Democrat, but a great friend of Lincoln. Years before they had gone together on a flatboating expedition down the Mississippi. He had wanted to vote for Lincoln for United States senator, but he could not do this without voting for the local Republican candidates for the legislature. As soon as he heard that Lincoln might be nominated for President, he was bound to vote for 'old Abe.'"

"One day I was talking with John about Abe, and he said that in 1830 they made a clearing twelve miles west of Decatur. There was a patch of timber,—fifteen or twenty acres,—and they had cleared it; they had built a cabin, cut the trees, mauged rails, and put up a fence.

"John," said I, 'did you split rails down there with old Abe?'

"Yes; every day," he replied.

"Do you suppose you could find any of them now?"

"Yes," he said. 'The last time I was down there, ten years ago, there were plenty of them left.'

"What are you going to do to-morrow?"

"Nothing."

"Then," said I, 'come around and get in my buggy, and we will drive down there.'

"So the next day we drove out to the old clearing. We turned in by the timber, and John said:

"Dick, if I don't find any black-walnut rails, nor any honey-locust rails, I won't claim it's the fence Abe and I built."

"Presently John said, 'There's the fence!'

"But look at these great trees," said I.

"Certainly," he answered. 'They have all grown up since.'

"John got out. I sat in the buggy. John kneeled down and commenced chipping the rails of the old fence with his knife.

Soon he came back with black-walnut shavings and honey-locust shavings.

"There they are!" said he, triumphantly, holding out the shavings. 'They are the identical rails we made.'

"Then I got out and made an examination of the fence. There were many black-walnut and honey-locust rails.

"John," said I, 'where did you cut these rails?'

"I can take you to the stumps," he answered.

"We will go down there," said I.

"We drove about a hundred yards.

"Now," said he, 'look! There's a black-walnut stump; there's another—another—another. Here's where we cut the trees down and split the rails. Then we got a horse and wagon, and hauled them in, and built the fence, and also the cabin.'

"We took two of the rails and tied them under the hind axletree of my new buggy, and started for town. People would occasionally pass, and think something had broken. We let them think so, for we did n't wish to tell anybody just what we were doing. We kept right on until we got to my barn.



FROM THE OLDRYD LINCOLN COLLECTION, WASHINGTON
A CAMPAIGN CARICATURE: A "RAIL" OLD
WESTERN GENTLEMAN.



ENGRAVED BY H. VELTEN, FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY BRADY.

GOVERNOR RICHARD J. OGLESBY, IN THE UNIFORM OF A MAJOR-GENERAL U. S. V.

There we hid the rails until the day of the convention.

"Before the convention met I talked with several Republicans about my plan, and we fixed it up that old John Hanks should take the rails into the convention. We made a banner, attached to a board across the top of the rails, with the inscription:¹

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

The Rail Candidate

For President in 1860.

Two rails from a lot of 3000 made in 1830 by John Hanks and Abe Lincoln, whose father was the first pioneer of Macon County.

"After the convention got under way, I arose and announced that an old Democrat desired to make a contribution to the convention. The proceedings stopped, and all was expectancy and excitement. Then in

walked old John with the rails. Lincoln was there in a corner, trying to escape observation.²

"How are you, Abe?" said John, familiarly, as he passed.

"How are you, John?" Lincoln answered with equal familiarity.

"Then the convention cheered and cheered. There were loud and persistent calls for a speech from Lincoln. Abe had not known that the rails were to be brought in. He hardly knew what to say about them.

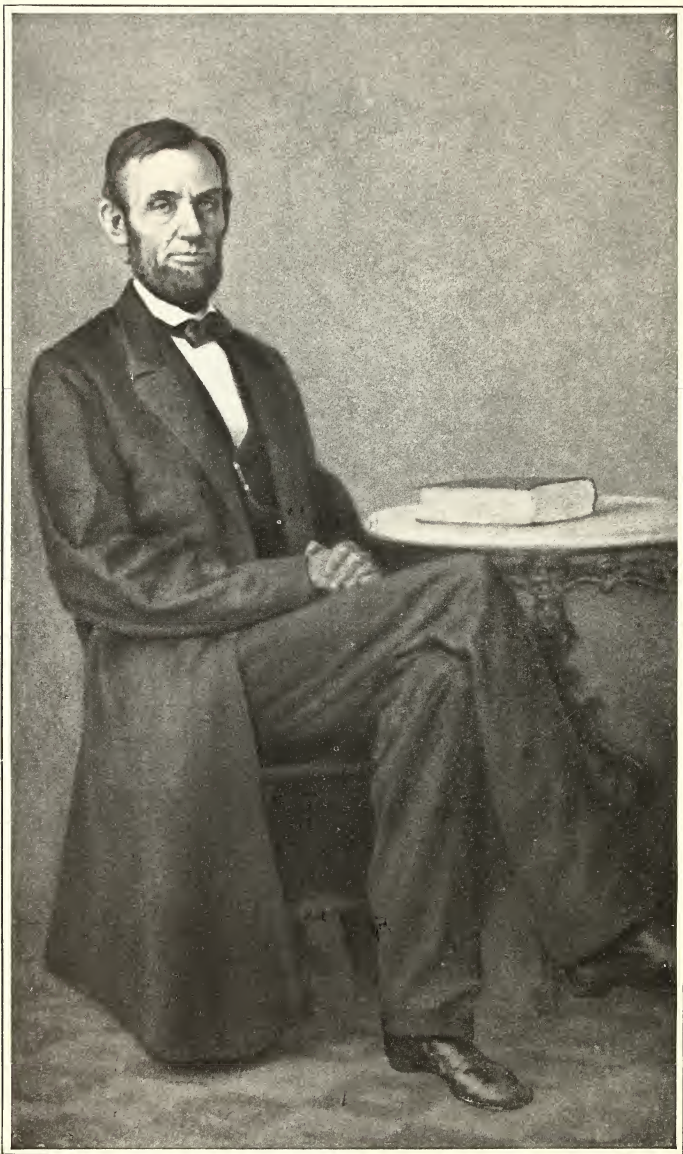
"Gentlemen," he finally said, 'John and I did make some rails down there; and if these are n't the identical rails we made, they certainly look very much like them.'

"From that time forward the rail was ever present in the campaign. There was a great demand for Lincoln rails. John Hanks sold the two that he brought into the convention. A man from Kentucky gave him five dollars for one. The next day he went out and got a

¹ Governor Oglesby recalled only the substance of the inscription. It is reproduced here from the files of the "Illinois State Journal," with the correction of an obvious error—the substitution of "John" for "Thomas" in the name of Hanks. The statement on the banner that Lincoln's father "was the first pioneer of Macon County" was not literally true, for Decatur village was founded a year before Thomas Lincoln settled on the Sangamon.

² Accounts do not all agree as to where Lincoln was

when the rails were carried in. Some of the biographers say he was on the rostrum; but Oglesby's statement receives confirmation from General John M. Palmer, who introduced the resolution instructing the national convention delegates for Lincoln. In a recent conversation with the writer General Palmer said: "I cannot say precisely where Lincoln was; but I feel certain he was not on the platform, and I should trust Oglesby's recollection on this point."



DRAWN BY GEORGE T. TOBIN, FROM A GARDNER PHOTOGRAPH IN THE CIVIL WAR COLLECTION OF ROBERT COSTER.
HALF-TONE PLATE ENGRAVED BY H. DAVIDSON.

AN UNPUBLISHED PORTRAIT OF LINCOLN.

wagon-load, and put them in my barn. He sold them for a dollar apiece. Then other people went into the business, and the supply seemed inexhaustible."

The unexpected introduction of the rails into the State convention produced a scene quite as dramatic, and was fruitful of results quite as potent and far-reaching as those expected by the astute Oglesby. The Seward delegates were overwhelmed; the convention adopted ringing resolutions instructing the delegation to the national convention to vote as a unit for Abraham Lincoln.

The fame of the rail overspread the country immediately. On the night following the nomination, at ratification meetings in many cities, notably Philadelphia, rails were conspicuously displayed.

Throughout the campaign the rail was everywhere and constantly to be seen. It was carried aloft in parades; flaming banners fluttered from it at rallies; glee-clubs sang its praises; campaign-clubs proudly called themselves "Rail-splitters," "Rail-maulers," and "Rail-splitter Wide-awakes"; lusty men, mounted on huge wagons, split rails as processions moved along; and "Lincoln rails" (of unquestioned authenticity) adorned hundreds of homes.

Cartoonists tried to evolve fun from the rail, and only increased its renown. Punters playfully tossed the word about. Lincoln was "a rail old gentleman." His eldest son was christened by a facetious correspondent the "Prince of Rails." "Why is Stephen A. Douglas a greater man than Abe Lincoln?" inquired one humorist. "Because the former split a party, while the latter only split rails."

Oglesby's powerful speeches were heard all over the State. The effective use which he made of John Hanks and the rail is illustrated by an incident at the Springfield meeting of August 8—the "monster rally" of the campaign. It was thus described a few days later by the editor of the Alton "Courier":

"The enthusiasm, which all the while had been running high, reached its height when the speaker [Oglesby] called for John Hanks, and drew him from the crowd upon the stage. Cheer after cheer went up as the old man, swarthy and toil-worn by the labors of many years, stood up and showed his honest face to the thousands standing on tiptoe to catch a glimpse of it. The speaker, in his peculiarly loud voice, then addressed him as follows:

"Now, John Hanks, in the presence of this vast multitude, I ask you, did you not

split three thousand rails with Abe Lincoln in Macon County, and navigate one flatboat from near old Salem to New Orleans?"

"We certainly did," replied John Hanks.

"Who shall describe the outburst of applause which spoke out from the mouths of the thousands who had gathered around the speaker's stand? It is indescribable, and can only be appreciated by those who had the good fortune to hear it. Old John Hanks at once became a favorite, and thousands took his hard and horny hand in theirs."

John Hanks, in a letter published in the Decatur "Chronicle" in July, 1860, recalls how he and Lincoln "set out together in the cold winter to cut and maul rails on the Sangamon River, in Macon County, thirty years ago, to inclose his father's little home, and from day to day kept at work until the whole was finished and the homestead fenced in." When he heard that the State convention would be held at Decatur, according to this letter, he went to town, and "told a friend of Abe's" (evidently meaning Oglesby), among other things, that he had made up his mind to present some of the old rails to the convention. "On our way out," the letter says further, "I told this friend of old Abe that if Abe should be nominated for President, I would vote for him." It will be observed that Hanks appears to take the credit for having originated the rail idea; but of course Hanks did not personally write the letter, writing not being among his accomplishments, and the clever politician who prepared it naturally wished the inference to be drawn that the rail episode was altogether the work of this veteran Democrat who had known Lincoln from boyhood.

Lincoln's own testimony on the rail question is not wanting. In the autobiographical sketch prepared for a campaign biographer shortly after his nomination, he wrote: "His [Lincoln's] father and family settled a new place on the north side of the Sangamon River, at the juncture of the timber-land and the prairie, about ten miles westerly from Decatur. Here they built a log cabin, into which they removed, made sufficient of rails to fence ten acres of ground, and fenced and broke the ground, and raised a crop of corn upon it the same year. These are, or are supposed to be, the rails about which so much is being said just now, though these are far from being the first or only rails ever made by Abraham."¹

¹ See the "Complete Works of Abraham Lincoln," by Nicolay and Hay, Vol. I, p. 640.

A NIGHT IN A BALLOON.

AN ASTRONOMER'S TRIP FROM PARIS TO THE SEA IN OBSERVATION OF LEONIDS.

BY DOROTHEA KLUMPKE.

MISS DOROTHEA KLUMPKE, author of the article which follows, is an American connected with the staff of the Paris Observatory, and is at the head of the force whose work is to measure and reduce the star-photographs taken at the observatory. She has the degree of doctor of mathematical sciences from the University of Paris, where her thesis was a mathematical treatise of high order on "The Rings of Saturn." It will interest our readers to know that when, on December 23, 1893, she sustained her thesis before Professors Darboux, Tisserand, and Andoyer, at the end of the examination M. Darboux is reported to have said: "Your thesis is the first which a woman has presented and successfully maintained with our faculty to obtain this degree. You worthily open the way, and the faculty votes unanimously to declare you worthy of obtaining the degree of doctor." Miss Klumpke is held in much esteem by astronomers.—EDITOR.

MY ascent in the balloon "La Centaure," in the early morning of November 16, 1899, seems to me a beautiful dream dreamed but yesterday. Owing to the untiring efforts of M. Wilfrid de Fonvielle, president of the Société française de Navigation aérienne, France, Germany, and Russia took part officially in the *aërostatic* observations of the Leonids, whose return was eagerly awaited by the astronomical world. One French balloon ascended shortly after midnight, November 15, and twenty-four hours later there rose from St. Petersburg, Strasburg, and St. Denis, the Russian, German, and French *aërostats* respectively. The Paris magazine, "La Vie au grand air," and the London "Times" also sent up balloons on the night of November 15-16.¹

The French scientific expeditions were under the patronage of M. Janssen, the eminent director of the Meudon Observatory, whose name is so widely connected with observations made from great altitudes, and to whom is due the construction of the observatory on the summit of Mont Blanc.

I do not know what good fairy overheard my wish, of many months ago, to take a trip in the blue sky. My surprise was great when I learned that M. Janssen and the representatives of the French Society of Aërial Navigation had chosen me their delegate for the astronomical expedition of the Leonids, November 16, 1899. After reflection,

I accepted the unexpected invitation. I am fond of traveling, and passionately fond of lofty heights. Towers, hills, mountains, have always been for me places of pilgrimage. Now I had the mysterious and alluring anticipation of an ascent in a balloon.

Serious preparations were made in view of the eventful night. Celestial charts were drawn; the stars of the Lion and the neighboring constellations were minutely identified. Often, in October and November, when the sky was clear, I found my way, in the solitary hours of the night, up the spiral staircase to the terrace of the Paris Observatory, and there studied the heavens. What would the 16th of November have in store for me? A shower of shooting stars furrowing the sky, such as was witnessed in South America on the night of November 11-12, 1799, and of which Humboldt and Bonpland have left vivid descriptions? A display of trails of light, like snowflakes, radiating from the Lion, and falling so thickly that, like Olmsted and Twining of New Haven, and like their fellow-astronomer of 1833, I should be unable to count them? Would the late Professor H. A. Newton's successful prediction of the Leonids' return for 1866 hold true also for 1899? And would the astronomers of our day, as Schmidt and Philpson in 1866, count by thousands the greenish, bluish, and whitish trails emanating from the constellation of the Lion, with

¹ It was in the early morning of Thursday, November 16, 1899, that the trip under the auspices of the "Times" was undertaken. The participants were the Rev. J. M. Bacon and his daughter, and Mr. Stanley Spencer, *aéronaut*. The start was made at Newbury, England, and the voyage proved to be a perilous one. The descent was

made in the afternoon of the same day at Neath, in a remote corner of South Wales, scarcely a mile and a half from the sea. In the landing Miss Bacon was severely injured, and her father was badly shaken. A full report of the expedition was printed in the "Times." —EDITOR.